

OKLAHOMA AREA OFFICE IT TRIBAL SHARES LISTENING SESSION

April 26, 2011

Presentations from Dr. Theresa Cullen (ISAC IT Priorities), Lisa DeCora (IT Tribal Shares listening session process) and Raymond Willie (Tribal Shares)

Listening session included participants from the Oklahoma Area Office, Cherokee Nation, Prairie Band of Potawatomi, Chickasaw Nation, Sac & Fox Nation, Kaw Nation, Seminole Nation, Creek Nation, Choctaw Nation, Muscogee Creek Nation, Citizen Band of Potawatomi, and Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma.

Feedback from the participants:

COMMENTS ABOUT IHS FUNDING

- Tribes would like to know what happened to any funds that were included in the diabetes and/or alcohol programs that were specific to IT and taken out of the Tribal shares formulation. Where is this money? What was it used for? How much was it? If there isn't information provided to Tribes, then how do Tribes know how much money was transferred and what it was used for? Currently, Oklahoma Tribes believe there was \$5 million each year under the diabetes program that was taken right off the top for IT. Same questions for substance abuse program.
- The HQ budget used to be transparent but now that is gone. In the past, a dollar could be tracked to where it was supposed to go and funds were "tagged" for certain purposes and that was how the funds were spent. Now, the IHS budget seems to be like "smoking mirror" going on.
- Would still like to know what the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funding for IT (\$85 million) was used for.
- Would prefer to receive funding and purchase own equipment instead of IHS purchasing it on behalf of the Tribe. Tribes do not want to be told what they need; they want to buy their own equipment, based on its needs.
- What happens to the "end of the year sweep" and where does that funding come from, where does that funding go and how much is it?
- Consolidating the three (3) budget lines (lines 126, 137 & 1301) would assist with transparency.
- There is concern if the OIT budget runs in a multi-million dollar deficit each year and portions are not adding up. Where is that money coming from and is funding being taken away from Tribal contract health programs or hospital and clinic funding? Tribes need to know what is happening to funding.
- Could OIT provide a table to show the amount and source of funding that comes in and then shows what goes out in Tribal shares, OIT products and services, and any other program requirements (for pass through funding)? Providing in an easy to read format, Tribes may be better able to understand what happened to the funds.

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT OIT PRODUCTS/SERVICES

- Treat OIT like a business with a "laundry list" of services/products along with the prices. Tribes do not want to settle and if they don't want the whole package of services, they don't want to pay for it either. While complicated, there is a need to develop a huge catalog of services/products

that Tribes will want to buy. Tribes want to and will participate in the end if they know what they are buying.

- Tribes want to be able to purchase the individual pieces within a package. Even though the IHS may continue to clump services/products together, Tribes are very technologically sophisticated and the granular level of reducing services/products works for them.
- Provide a clear description of what Tribal shares was used for. In a few years, the staff that negotiated may be gone but how is the IHS and Tribe know what the funding was for?

COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION ON SERVICES/PRICES

- The PSFA Manual has not been updated since 2002 and technology has changed drastically since that time. When the PSFA Manual is approved, OIT should be separated out so it can be updated each year as technology/services/prices change. Since IT hasn't completed its Tribal consultation so that section should be held back until the process can be completed.
- Tribes that are significantly engaged in IT issues should be surveyed and IHS should discuss IT issues with them. The ISAC may not be the most efficient way to provide or disburse information.
- Use Tribal Chief Information Officers as an open line of communication about OIT activities/services/prices. Letters from the IHS Director do not always filter down to the appropriate staff in charge of IT level.
- Providing a menu of IT services/products would show what matters to Tribal organizations and priorities. Should take into consideration issues of efficiency and affordability. IHS needs to look at cost-related volume and not provide a service/product that only a few Tribes want and can afford. The question for the ISAC may be what do Tribes want and what can everyone afford?
- Research & Development (R & D) costs: Where does the R & D costs get reflected in the OIT budget and spend plan? It was mentioned that IHS must look at a "pay now or pay later" model for R & D costs. As such, if you purchase now, the price is discounted. Another option would be to just have an R & D budget. Also, if IHS is developing new services/products and Tribes are interested, that investment would go into the price. But in order for this concept to work, Tribes would need to be significantly involved in IT (what they want and what they need-like an annual survey).
- Service Level Agreements: IHS has Tribal shares agreements but not service level agreements.
- As Tribes start to provide a list of priorities, this will show what services/products they are interested in and have value. How does IHS balance customers' requests with Federal mandates if the directions are opposite?
- If there is an interesting proposal or development, share idea with Tribes to see if they want to invest in the product/service where Tribes are developing and working with IHS. Could even be a situation where a Tribe develops the product but IHS funds the project.

COMMENTS ABOUT TRIBAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

- Suggested that OIT use an email that has OIT or IT in the email address. Using TribalShares@ihs.gov is too vague and may get emails on any Tribal shares issue, instead of IT only.
- Suggested that OIT use a "list-serve" email to provide updates and information to its recipients.

- The co-effort or “partnership” between IHS and the Tribes has dropped down in priority. Since 1995, Tribes have developed sophisticated IT efforts by developing their own systems and investing a lot of money but IHS never recognized them as true partners. The IHS developed its “top down” intent but when the Tribes do not participate in the budget process, it is horrible.
- Partnerships with Tribes: IHS will find that Tribes are reasonable but the key is to sit down at the table with Tribes.